

Book Note

Behavioral Contributions to Health Care: A Review of King and Remenyi's *Health Care: A Behavioural Approach*

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Behavioral approaches to disease and health management have been at the forefront of psychological interventions in health care settings. Over the past decade, numerous books have been published that describe the application of behavioral principles and procedures in health care settings (Davidson & Davidson, 1980; Gentry, 1984; McNamara, 1979; Pomerleau & Brady, 1979; Williams and Gentry, 1977). King and Remenyi's book includes a broad range of topics contributed by our behavioral colleagues from "down under" (i.e., Australia and New Zealand).

This book says a little (short, concise chapters) about a lot (some 27 different topics). It is divided into three sections. The first section ("Foundations of Behavioural Health Care") addresses theoretical, assessment, and design issues relevant to a behavioral approach to health care. Included is a discussion of learning theories and behavioral factors (e.g., stress) that contribute to illness. The second section ("Applications in Behavioural Health Care") is by far the most lengthy of the book. A broad range of topics is covered including smoking, obesity, and chronic pain, with each chapter containing a brief, selective review of the literature and practical guidelines for clinicians. The last section of the book ("Contemporary Issues in Behav-

oural Health Care") includes a discussion of organizational behavior management strategies for health care, community health, and health promotion, with a nice discussion of the effective use of the media.

The final chapter by Robin Winkler ("Rights and Duty: The Need for a Social Model") is particularly noteworthy. Winkler makes the distinction between two potentially competing approaches to health care: the "rights" approach, which emphasizes the rights of all people to quality health care services, and the "duty" approach, which emphasizes the responsibility of individuals for adopting healthy life-styles. Winkler argues that because behavioral strategies are particularly suited to life-style intervention, a behavioral approach to health care may come down too heavily on the side of the "duty" approach. This could have unfortunate consequences because important social processes that impact on health (such as indirect governmental support of the tobacco and alcohol industries through subsidies) would be underemphasized. This point is reminiscent of one made by Winkler (with Richard Winett) over a decade ago that behavioral techniques can be instruments of the educational system "status quo" to the detriment of the educational process (Winett & Winkler, 1972). As behavioral approaches continue to gain favor in health care settings, danger exists that we will support the status quo of a health care system in need of alterations to serve people better. A cogent example is in the area of medical compliance, where it has been shown that accessible health care from the same provider who is concerned

King, N. J., & Remenyi, A. (Eds.). (1986). *Health care: A behavioural approach*. Sidney: Grune & Stratton.

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and empathetic can lead to better compliance (DiMatteo & DiNicola, 1982).

One should not judge a book by its cover, but a book can be judged by the stated aims of the authors. King and Remenyi state that they have attempted to provide an introduction to the application of behavioral principles in health care settings that was written for all health professionals and that included selective literature reviews and practical guidelines. And indeed, they have met these aims. There is something for everyone in that an extensive number of topics are covered, which is in contrast to other books in this vein that cover a more limited number of topics, albeit in more depth. For those who are looking for an introductory text on behavioral approaches to health care, this book would provide such an introduction, especially in its emphasis on practical approaches to health-related problems that are consistent with the research literature. What this book offers in breadth, however, it sacrifices in depth. If you are looking for extensive coverage of individual topics (e.g., behavioral approaches to smoking cessation), this volume will be disappointing. Thus, its use as a graduate level text in health psychology would not be appropriate. It could, however, serve nicely as a text for undergraduate health psychology and allied health care courses.

The editors admit that they are decidedly behavioral in their orientation (defined broadly to include cognitive-behavioral, as well as traditional classical and operant conditioning approaches). Nonetheless, their hope was that this volume would also address the limitations and problems with a behavioral approach to health care. Again, they have

met this aim quite well in that literature reviews are critical when appropriate—the contributors are well aware of the limits of our current data base. Those psychologists who are decidedly nonbehavioral will have a number of objections to this book starting with its title which includes the word “behavioural” (behavioral). They would object to the use of the term “behavioral health care” just as we of a behavioral persuasion would object to the term “psychodynamic health care” or other such theoretical modifiers (cf. Millon, 1982). I will not bother to address this issue because the editors clearly identified their behavioral orientation. Besides, those who would appreciate my addressing this issue are probably not reading this review.

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